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A FAST SERMON

On Occasion of the

REBELLION in *SCOTLAND*

In the Year 1745.

Preached at Grays Inn Chapel.

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By HENRY STEBBING, *D. D.*
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty,
AND
Preacher to that Honourable Society.

LONDON,
Printed for R. Manby, and H. S. Cox, on
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[Price Six Pence.]

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JEREMIAH vi. 8.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, *lest my Soul depart from thee: Lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.*

THE principal Subject of this Prophecy of *Jeremiah* is the *Babylonish* Captivity, then near at hand; which is described in such Terms as well agree with the Occasion of the present Solemnity. *Out of the* NORTH *an Evil shall break forth upon all the Inhabitants of the Land*[a]. — *Set up the Standard towards Zion; retire, stay not; for I will bring evil from the* NORTH *and a great Destruction. The Lion is come up from his Thicket, and the Destroyer is on his Way; he is gone forth from his Place, to make the Land desolate and thy Cities shall be laid waste, without an Inhabitant*[b]. — *Lo I will bring a Nation upon you from far, O House of Israel, saith the Lord; it is a mighty Nation, it is an ancient Nation* — *And they shall eat up thine Harvest, and thy Bread which thy Sons and thy Daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy Flocks, and thine Herds; they shall eat up thy Vines and thy Figtrees. They shall impo-*

[a] Chap. i. 14. [b] Chap. iv. 6, 7.

[c] Chap. v. [d] 2 Kings xix. 28.

riſh thy fenced Cities wherein thou truſtedſt with the Sword[c].

How literally do theſe Words deſcribe the Miſeries which many of our Fellow-Subjects have felt, and were very lately the Fears and Apprehenſions of the whole Nation; when our *Northern Invaders* by rapid Marches had entred the very Heart of our Kingdom, and ſeemed to threaten a general Deſolation! And though, by the Activity of a brave and gallant young Prince, God hath *put his Hook in their Noſes, and his Bridle in their Lips, and hath turned them back by the Way by which they came*[d]; yet let us not be ſecure. The Beginnings of national Troubles are open and viſible to all; the end of them who can reach but that All-wiſe Being, who hath the Government of the whole Creation in his Hands; who diſpoſeth the Hearts, directs the Counſels, and proſpers or fruſtrates the Devices and Enterprizes of Men, as beſt ſuits the Purpoſes of his Providence?

The proper way, therefore, of treating this Event, is to receive it as a Leſſon of *Inſtruction*; as a warning from Providence to turn from our evil Ways, that we may be fit Objects of his Care and Protection, in which alone our true Security lies.

That the Fate of Nations, whether for Preſervation or Deſtruction, depends upon God's Providence is a Point I need not prove. As Chriſtians we muſt be ſuppoſed to come prepared with this Leſſon; and the Solemnity itſelf is a public Confeſſion of it. I ſhall therefore ſpend the

[c] Chap. v. 15. [d] 2 Kings xix. 28.

Time

Time allotted me on this Occaſion, in ſuggeſting ſuch Obſervations upon the preſent State of Things (in a *religious* View) as may help us to form a right Judgment of ourſelves; that, knowing our *Diſeaſe*, we may be the better able to apply the proper *Remedy*. This is the Method the Prophet took with the People of the *Jews*. He foreſaw their Deſtruction near at hand, which nothing but their Repentance could prevent; and therefore he ſets their Sins before them in a very particular Manner. And if you will attend to the ſeveral Parts of the Charge, you will eaſily ſee how much we are concerned in it.

The firſt Accuſation we find, Chap. ii. 5. *What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after Vanity and are become vain? Neither ſaid they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the Land of Egypt? — And I brought them into a plentiful Country, to eat the Fruit thereof, and the Goodneſs thereof? But when ye entred, ye defiled my Land, and made mine Heritage an Abomination. The Prieſts ſaid not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the Law knew me not; the Paſtors alſo tranſgreſſed againſt me, and the Prophets propheſied by* Baal, *and walked after Things that do not profit.*

This is a Charge of *Revolt* and *Apoſtaſy* from GOD to *Idols*, in the *higheſt* and in the *loweſt*; to aggravate which the Prophet puts them in Mind of God's Mercy towards them in bringing them out of the Land of *Egypt*, where they

they were Slaves, and planting them in the Land of *Canaan*. We too have our *Egypt*, from whence we have been delivered; the *Slavery*, and *Tyranny* of POPERY. And God hath planted us in this *plentiful Country*, where his Word is taught, and the Sacraments are duly adminiſtred; *to eat of the Fruit thereof, and the Goodneſs thereof.* But we have *defiled* God's *Land*; *and made* his *Heritage an Abomination.* We have departed from HIM to worſhip an *Idol* of our own ſetting up; not an *Angel* or a *Saint* indeed; not an *Image* of *Wood* or *Stone*; but the *Idol* of our OWN UNDERSTANDING, to which we offer Incenſe in *Diſparagement* of that Lord whom *Angels worſhip*, and who hath *bought* and *redeemed us* by his Blood!

Go on with the Character of the *Jews*, and you will find them quite corrupted in their Morals. *Run ye to and fro through the Streets of* Jeruſalem, *and ſee now and know and ſeek in the broad Places thereof, if ye can find a Man, if there be any that executeth Judgment, that ſeeketh the Truth, and I will pardon it. — Thou haſt ſtricken them but they have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them but they have refuſed to receive Correction; they have made their Faces harder than a Rock; they have refuſed to return. Therefore I ſaid ſurely theſe are poor, they are fooliſh, for they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgments of their God,* Chap. v. 1——5. The Prophet ſeems aſtoniſhed at ſo much Wickedneſs among the common Sort, and is willing to impute it to their want

want of knowing better. But thoſe that were better taught produced no better Fruit; for ſo it follows — *I will get me unto the great Men and will ſpeak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the Judgment of their God. But theſe have altogether broken the Yoke and burſt the Bonds. — When I had fed them to the full, they then committed Adultery, and aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlot's Houſes. They were as fed Horſes in the Morning; every one neighed after his Neighbour's Wife,* ℣ 5.—9. — Read on towards the latter end of this Chapter, and at the beginning of the *ninth*; and you will find a general Decay of all the *humane* and *ſocial* Virtues. There was neither *Truth*, nor *Juſtice*, nor *Honeſty* among them. *Among my People are found wicked Men: They lay wait as he that ſetteth Snares; they ſet a Trap; they catch Men. As a Cage is full of Birds, ſo are their Houſes full of Deceit. Therefore they are become great and waxen rich. — They overpaſs the Deeds of the wicked; they judge not the Cauſe of the Fatherleſs, — nor the Right of the Needy* [a] *— They bend their Tongue like their Bow for Lies — they will deceive every one his Neighbour — they proceed from Evil to Evil, and know not me, ſaith the Lord* [b]. All this while the outward *Form* and *Ceremonial* of Religion was kept up; but this inſtead of mending Things made them worſe, as it was an Addition of *Profaneneſs* to the reſt of their Crimes; which the Prophet very plainly intimates

[a] Chap. v. 26—28. [b] Chap. ix. 3—5.

mates to them, Chap. vi. ℣ 20. *To what Purpoſe cometh there to me Incenſe from* Sheba? *and the ſweet Cane from a far Country? Your Burnt-Offerings are not acceptable, nor your Sacrifices ſweet unto me.*

Is there nothing like this in OUR *Jeruſalem?* Go from the Palaces of the *Great* to the *broad Places in the Streets, and ſee and know.* — It is *impoſſible* that Vice ſhould not abound, when the *Root* from whence it ſprings hath laid faſt hold in any Nation. When the *Jews* departed from the God *Jehovah* and worſhipped *Idols*, Corruption of Manners followed of Courſe. For the Idol Worſhip of thoſe Times was full of all manner of Impurities. *The People ſat down to eat and drink and roſe up to play*; i. e. to *commit Whoredoms*; for this was the Manner of the Heathens in their Feaſts of Sacrifice; and nothing ſo much inticed Men to Idolatry, as thoſe filthy Pleaſures which made a part of their Worſhip. Do you now wonder to hear the Prophet crying out, *They be all Adulterers?* If you wonder not at this, wonder not at what follows, they are *an Aſſembly of treacherous Men*: For when *Drunkenneſs* and *Laſciviouſneſs*, have once got Poſſeſſion of the Man, no Virtue can thrive. *Truth*, and *Honeſty*, and *Juſtice* muſt all give way; for one Place will not hold them. UNBELIEF throws out the ſame Bait. Go to St. *Paul* and he will ſay *flee Fornication* — and *let every Man have his own Wife and every Woman her own Huſband.* But go to your Men of *natural Religion*, and you will not (ordinarily) find ſuch good Morality. This is not becauſe the Goſpel

in

in theſe Points, *varies* from natural Religion; for the Goſpel as to its *Moral* Precepts, is but the *Tranſcript* of the *natural Law*; and a Man's own *Conſcience*, if honeſtly conſulted, will condemn *lewd Practices*, in as ſtrong Terms as his *Bible*. But you are to conſider in this Caſe, not ſo much what *is* Reaſon, as what by artful Inſinuations, or the Flattery of his own corrupt Affections, a Man may be brought to *think* and *call* Reaſon. *Reaſon* is not ſo uncorrupt a Judge but it may be *tampered* with. We ſee it in a thouſand Inſtances, that Men judge and think very differently of the ſame Points, as their *Intereſts* or their *Paſſions* ſway. The Scripture ſpeaks of thoſe *who call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs; bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter*. Iſa. v. 20. And when Men are familiarized to this kind of Self-deceit, it is ſcarce to be conceived what Lengths they may run, and yet be *wiſe in their own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight*. *Ib.* v. 21.

It is as certain that INFIDELITY weakens moral Virtue, as it is ſure that the Goſpel ſtrengthens and improves it. The Law in theſe Points, as it lies in our Bible, is ſo plain, that *he that runs may read*; and the Rewards it holds forth to good Men, and the Terror it ſhakes over the Heads of Sinners, are the moſt effectual that can be conceived to enforce the Practice of it. *Natural* Religion, in the moſt *perfect* Notion of it, can-

not give that *Security* and *Fulneſs* of Aſſurance concerning a future State, that Revelation does. But what by many, (and thoſe too who *rely* upon it) is *called* Natural Religion, throws it entirely out of the Queſtion. And what are you to look for from ſuch as theſe! Do you think that thoſe who expect to *die* like Beaſts, will not *live* like them too? Beſides; the practical Rules of *Chriſtianity* tie us down to a conſtant State of Diſcipline. We are commanded to be frequent in Prayer; to be diligent in hearing and learning God's Word, and in attending upon his publick Worſhip. Theſe Things help to keep us *awake*, and habituate us to a *thinking*, *ſerious* Diſpoſition; for lack of which it is, that we are led away by the Follies and Vanities of the World. Therefore when you ſee the Ordinances of God fallen into Contempt, and whilſt ſome are wholly intent upon Gain, others mind nothing but Diverſions and Recreations; you may be aſſured that the Morals of a Nation are *ſunk*, and growing apace from bad to worſe. The LORD's *Day* is a Seaſon which the Wiſdom of all Chriſtian Nations has ſet apart for religious Purpoſes; and it is of that Conſequence, that the Fate of Religion ſeems to depend upon it. And accordingly we may obſerve in reading the Prophets, that in the worſt and moſt corrupted States of the *Jewiſh* Church, the *breaking* God's *Sabbaths*, bears a principal Figure in the Catalogue of their Sins. In the primitive Church the Chriſtian Sabbath was kept, though not with a *Jewiſh*

Preciſeneſs, yet with a religious exactneſs. It's being turned into a Day of *Diverſions* is owing to the growth of *Corruptions* in the Church, and the *Relaxation* of *Diſcipline*. We may ſee enough of it in popiſh Countries; and we hear and ſee enough of it *at home* for all to lament who wiſh well to Religion. In this reſpect we are *growing* popiſh as faſt as we can; and who knows how ſoon we may be reconciled to worſe Things?

Now if it be ſo, that the *Power* and *Spirit* of Religion is departed from us; what can we have to plead why GOD ſhould not depart from us, and *give us over unto the Will of our Enemies?* Our Fathers threw out all that was *bad* in Popery. Shall their Sons throw out all that is *good* in it too? Was it the intention of Providence in giving us a purer Faith and a purer Worſhip, that we ſhould ceaſe to be even *Chriſtians?* God called the *Iſraelites* out of Slavery to be his People: When they had corrupted their Ways before him he ſent them into Slavery again. And would it not be juſt as right, when we have made ſo bad a Uſe of our Reformation from Popery, to ſend us back again to Popery? And how would you like this? Are you willing to give up your Bibles for lying Legends? To exchange that grave, ſenſible, and manly Worſhip which the Church of *England* provides for all her Sons and Daughters; for mere *Gibberiſh* that you do not underſtand? Are you willing (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks) to *change the Glory of the uncorruptible God,*

into an Image made like to corruptible Man; and to forſake Chriſt the only Mediator, to truſt to the *Merits* and *Interceſſions* of frail and ſinful Men like yourſelves? If you do not like this, then conſider the Conſequences. As Matters now ſtand, the Word of God is open to you all. You may read and judge for yourſelves; and as you ſhall judge you may ſerve and worſhip God without hazard to your Perſons or your Properties. If Popery comes in, you will have no Liberty left. You muſt believe as the CHURCH believes if you *can*: Or however, you muſt worſhip as the Church *preſcribes* whether you like it, or whether you like it not; or you muſt fall under the publick Reſentment. And can you remember what your Fore-fathers ſuffered, and what Multitudes have ſince, and do yet ſuffer, from popiſh Cruelty, and not preſage what you are to look for yourſelves, if ever Popery ſhould get Footing among us, and have *Law* and *Authority* on her Side? I am ſpeaking to the *ſerious* and to the *religious*, for *ſuch* only will feel the force of this Argument. What is it to bad Men what Religion is uppermoſt? Popery is as good to make a ſhew with as any thing elſe; and it would bring this Advantage with it to the *Scorners* of the Age, that they might then laugh at the Religion of their Country with a better Grace. But it would be a ſevere Puniſhment to the *worſt* as well as to the *beſt* of us, if God ſhould bring us under the Power of thoſe who ſhould take from us our civil Liberties and Properties. This was the Caſe of the *Jews*.

From

From a free People they became the Subjects of *Babylon*, into whoſe Dominions they were removed from their native Place. And ſhould *France* or *Spain* prevail againſt us, we ſhould ſee the free-born Subjects of *England* either tranſplanted into foreign Countries, or left at home upon ſuch hard Terms, as would make even *their own* Country a *ſtrange Land*.

Let us all then take our Shares in the *common Diſtreſs*; and laying aſide all private Grudges and Party Diſcontents, unite *as one Man* to withſtand the Torrent that is breaking in upon us, and ſeems to threaten Deſtruction to us and to our Poſterity. It is ſome Comfort to us in this melancholy Poſture of Affairs, to ſee that warm Spirit againſt the preſent outrageous Attempt upon our Eſtabliſhment, which has ſhewed itſelf among all Ranks and Conditions of Men throughout the Kingdom; and I hope we are to look upon this as a Symptom that there is ſtill ſome Virtue left among us. But of this I am certain; that the greateſt Security of this Nation againſt Popery (and of Conſequence againſt a popiſh Government, which muſt infallibly introduce Popery) will always lie in the *Hearts* and *Conſciences* of the People. And this even *humanly* ſpeaking, will make it worth the Attention of our civil Governors to cultivate and cheriſh the publick Virtue, and to check that Spirit of *Licenciouſneſs* and *Irreligion*, which by a long and uninterrupted Interval of *Peace* and *Affluence* has been growing up among us, and which prevails (I think)

think) beyond the Examples of former Ages. I believe it impoſſible that a popiſh Government ſhould ever gain a quiet Admiſſion in this Kingdom, unleſs it comes through the Door of *Irreligion*. There are, no doubt, Reaſons of civil Policy, weighty and ſtrong, againſt the accepting a popiſh Government which it falls not within my Province to enumerate to you. But theſe are not of that general concern, perhaps, nor of ſo certain Influence. Bribes or Promiſes may corrupt the great ones; and thoſe who want only to be at quiet may think to ſave themſelves by an outward Compliance; in which there will be no hardſhip, if they have no Virtue. But thoſe who are Proteſtants upon a Principle of *Conſcience*, can expect no Mercy; and as they are convinced that the returning back to Popery would be a Forfeiture of their Allegiance to GOD; they will naturally be diſpoſed to give Proof of their Allegiance to the GOVERNMENT that protects them. But what can *Man* do for us if GOD is againſt us? and againſt us he *will* be if *we* are againſt *him*. Our time may not yet be come; for deep and unſearchable are the Ways of Providence. There is what the Scripture calls a *filling up the Meaſure* of Iniquity; a *Ripeneſs* for Judgment (ſeen and known only to infinite Wiſdom,) which muſt always precede national Deſtructions. Even this great Judgment upon the *Jews* was not intended to *make a full End of them*; for the ſame Prophet who foretold their *Captivity*, foretold alſo their *Reſtauration*, which was accompliſhed in due Seaſon. Their *final* Extirpation was reſerved for their *laſt*

laſt black Act, the *crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory*; after which their City and their Temple were again deſtroyed, and *they* ſcattered among the Nations never to be a People more. Let us beware leſt that come upon *us*, which fell upon *them*. We cannot crucify *Chriſt* as they did; for *Chriſt* could die but once. But if we have the *Mind* and *Spirit* of thoſe who crucifyed *Chriſt*; if we profane his Ordinances; if we deſpiſe his Laws; if we treat him as a *Cheat* and an *Impoſtor*: We are, to all Intents and Purpoſes, the *Crucifiers* of *Chriſt*, according to that of the Apoſtle, *Heb.* vi. 6. where ſpeaking of thoſe who had *fallen away* after they had been *once enlightened*, and had *taſted of the heavenly Gift* (the very caſe of the preſent Race of *Unbelievers*) ſays, that *they* CRUCIFIED *to themſelves the Son of God* AFRESH, *and put him to an open Shame.*

Little will it avail us to ſay, that other Nations are as bad as we. For who knows what God intends to do with other Nations? He may make us all Scourges to one another. He may make *France* or *Spain* our Deſtroyers, *themſelves* at laſt to be ſwallowed up by ſome *other* Power. He may *liſt up his Enſigns from afar*, and *ſet up his Standard* in ſome obſcure Corner of the Earth, from whence to raiſe up to himſelf, a People that ſhall ſerve him in Righteouſneſs, as ſaith the Prophet; *I will ſay to them which were not my People, thou art my People, ye are the Sons of the living God*, Hoſ. i. 10, and ii. 23.

The

The *Jews*, by the wiſe Providence of God, were made the keepers of Privileges of which they were to have no Benefit themſelves. They were broken off becauſe of Unbelief, and WE of the *Gentiles* were taken in. What then ſhould hinder US from being cut off in our turns, if we follow their Example of Unbelief? There is a ſtrong Paſſage in St. *Paul* to this Purpoſe which will deſerves your Conſideration: *If ſome of the Branches were broken off, and thou being a wild Olive Tree wert grafted in amongſt them, and partakedſt of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive Tree; boaſt not againſt the Branches: But if thou boaſt, thou beareſt not the Root but the Root thee. Thou wilt ſay then; the Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well; becauſe of Unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by Faith. Be not high minded but fear. For if God ſpared not the natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the Goodneſs and Severity of God: On them which fell, Severity; but towards thee Goodneſs, if thou continue in his Goodneſs, otherwiſe* THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF. *Rom.* xi. 17——22. This ſhews that what was a Reaſon with God for cutting off the *Jews* will be a Reaſon for his cutting off the *Gentiles*; in which he ſpeaks not of *one* Chriſtian Nation only, but of *all*; and what is this to *him* to whom *all Nations are as nothing?* Iſaiah xl. 17. Whether we are yet ripe enough for this, it belongs to *him* to judge, who is able to perform it, and not to *us*.

But

But this uſe we may and *ſhould* make of theſe general Warnings; to be always apprehenſive, when we ſee great and general Corruptions, that the Time *may* be near at hand; and ſo to prepare ourſelves by the Works of Repentance, that, if it be the Will of God, we may eſcape the common Deſtruction. The Darkneſs which God has been pleaſed to throw over Events of this kind, is a ſufficient Ground for *Hope*, and *Truſt* in him; but ſhould never be made a Handle for *Security*. We have this Day confeſſed to Almighty God, **With Sorrow and Confuſion, our long Unfruitfulneſs under the Means of Grace, the Light of his Goſpel, and the many wonderful Deliverances of this Church and State, which he, in his great Goodneſs, has vouchſafed unto us.** And that ſhould he **enter into Judgment with us for the crying Sins of this Nation, our Profaneneſs and Infidelity, Hereſies and Schiſms our groſs Impurities and other manifold Offences,** he **might juſtly inflict upon us the Severity of his Wrath, and deliver us up to the Reproaches and Inſults of our Enemies.** Let our *future* Conduct ſhew that theſe are not vain Words. Great and many are the Deliverances which God hath wrought for theſe Nations. The *Reformation* from POPERY was *Life from the Dead*; and hardly was this ſettled, when a Cloud aroſe and intercepted for a time the beauteous Proſpect; which God diſperſed as by a ſudden Blaſt, by taking out of our Sight that cruel and bloody

Queen that would have *undone* his Work, and *reſtored* again the *Empire* of *Darkneſs* among us. When CIVIL DISSENTIONS had put the Nation in a Flame, and brought on thoſe Troubles that ended in the Deſtruction of our *King* and *Conſtitution*; he recalled, as by a Miracle, his exiled Son, and with *him* reſtored to us our Religion and Liberties. And when again, in the ſucceeding Reign, the reſtleſs Spirit of Popery, was making freſh Attempts, and breaking in upon us by open Violation of our Laws; he ſent us a DELIVERER, by whoſe wiſe and juſt Adminiſtration all our Breaches were healed, and the Church and State (ſo far as human Means could go) were ſettled upon a ſure and laſting Foundation. Now it is a Queſtion, which every Man's Reaſon will naturally ſuggeſt to him; What *Returns* has God received for theſe repeated Inſtances of his Mercy? In thus interpoſing for the Security of our Religion and Liberties, ſurely he meant that ſome good *Effects* ſhould follow; and what is the *proper* Effect of a Reformation in *Doctrine* and *Worſhip*, but the Reformation of our *Manners*? Or what the true Uſe of Liberty, but the employing all our Powers and Faculties to the Honour of God, and to the Benefit of Mankind?

Let us, therefore, *be watchful, and ſtrengthen the Things that remain*; let us *remember how* we have *received, and heard, and from whence* we *are fallen, and hold faſt and repent*, leſt God *come unto* us *quickly, and removes* our *Candleſtick out of his Place*. Rev. ii. 5. and Chap. iii. 2, 3.

God hath promiſed to *build* his *Church upon a Rock*, and that *the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*. But he wants not our Help to fulfil his own Will. He can raiſe up to himſelf a Church though *we* ſhould be given up to Deſtruction, as he told the *Jews* in a parallel Caſe; *Think not to ſay within yourſelves we have* Abraham *to our Father*; *for I ſay unto you that God is able of theſe Stones to raiſe up Children unto Abraham.* Matt. iii. 9. And ſhould it pleaſe God, for our manifold Tranſgreſſions, to *put out our Light*, and give us up again to the *blindneſs* of Popery, or to ſomething worſe; it would be but acting according to the *declared* Method of his Providence in ſuch Caſes. *The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.* Chap. xxi. 43.

But I hope for better Things; and God give us all Grace ſo to repent us of our evil Ways, that he may ſtill be merciful to us, and *hide us under the Shadow of his Wings until* our Danger *be overpaſt*. Amen.

FINIS.